

Douglas Faust Blackledge

Dang! This is not ready for Prime Time, i.e., Chapter. I am returning it to the Doug Folder under the Mike Folder (yes, under OneDrive > Documents > Mike >)

Douglas Faust Blackledge was the best of us. Doug had it all - charm, sense of humor, great intellect and athletic ability, love of animals and children, all behind a winning smile. Retired USAF LtCol and HH-60G Pave Hawk Helicopter Pilot. Combat Search and Rescue Warrior who was working on his Masters Degree in Finance when he left this world. Contrarian and Daedalian. We will treasure our memories.

He was the best of us. I wrote those words in February 2016 after receiving the phone call informing me that the Brevard County Sheriff's Office had found Doug deceased in his recliner in his home in Melbourne, Florida. His loyal dog Tyson was at his side. "No evidence of suicide or foul play," they reported. "The body has apparently been there for some time."

The Medical Examiner's report came back: *Cause of death: Fatty liver.* Wait, what? How can a strong 45-year old from a fatty liver? Bonnie's cousin Dr. Kenneth Hirsch had served as a Medical Examiner for the Air Force for some time in San Francisco, and provided some explanation and closure:

I did over 2000 autopsies at the San Francisco Coroner's office in the late '60s when I was a pathology resident at University of California in San Francisco. At autopsy, I would often see otherwise healthy people who had died suddenly at home, and the only finding at autopsy was an enlarged fatty liver. Under the microscope however, the blood vessels in the lungs were clogged with fat. When that happens, the blood cannot get to the lungs to exchange the carbon dioxide that the red blood cells are carrying for oxygen to carry back to all the organs in the body. The process is called fat embolism, and behaves exactly like pulmonary embolism, when a blood clot clogs the pulmonary arteries instead of fat. The result is the same - the person's heart is beating and they are breathing, but no blood is getting to the lungs, so they essentially suffocate and die. Apparently, as the liver cells are dying, they release the fat which then travels via the blood to the heart and gets pumped into the lungs, where it clogs the pulmonary arteries.

As far as the cause of fatty liver - when all the liver cells fill with fat and therefore cannot efficiently detoxify the blood coming from the intestines and lower body, they die. That is usually seen in starvation and/ or more often in acute alcohol poisoning or alcoholism. Some chemicals, like carbon tetrachloride can also cause it.

Thus this was not unusual.